

How Changes in the Healthcare Environment Mean New Marketing Opportunities for Pharmaceutical Providers

Consider, for a moment, a single patient.

She's young and has always been relatively healthy, but lately she's had some health concerns. Like anyone would, she makes an appointment with her healthcare provider, hoping her doctor can help find a solution to her problem.

In the past, that would have been it. She would have waited for her appointment, waited for her diagnosis, then waited some more for her doctor to write a prescription that would hopefully help. But today that cycle of waiting has changed. Armed with online sources like WebMD, with a wealth of knowledge at her fingertips, that patient will now come to her medical appointment more knowledgeable than ever. She'll have questions and demand answers from her healthcare provider, holding him more accountable for everything he says and does. Sometimes she'll be misinformed: it will be up to her doctor to set her right.

Patients like this one—feeling newly empowered—are just one aspect of the evolving healthcare environment of today. And as the industry itself and the norms that once ruled it change, physicians and other healthcare providers are forced to keep up, finding new ways to stay informed and meet increased demands. To help them, their circle of influence has widened, including digital sources, social media, online forums, traditional journal articles by key opinion leaders, and even those patients themselves.

Pharmaceutical companies, as a result, are looking for new opportunities of their own to help get their products in front of those who prescribe them, in order to meet the needs of a new generation of healthcare providers. They're trying to forge new relationships, and are looking for the right tools to help them do it.

Five Changes That Help Define the New Healthcare Environment

Five key changes to the healthcare environment have affected the way physicians approach their prescription decisions, in turn altering the traditional relationships that have always existed between doctors and pharmaceutical reps. These changes have pharmaceutical companies looking for new approaches to fuel prescription sales.

1 Tighter Schedules Have Become the Norm

In the past, it was normal for pharmaceutical reps to wine and dine physicians, and to schedule long presentations to share news about their wares. But those meetings are no longer possible for many of today's doctors. As insurers and the Affordable Care Act drive down the cost per patient per visit, physicians are forced to see more patients, with little time left for the in-person detailing of the past. In fact, a 2012 secret-shopper style study by BioPharma Alliance found that the calls viewed only lasted an average of six minutes; 90 percent of them occurred standing up and less than half resulted in meaningful discussion.

2 Transparency is a Must

Today's healthcare providers are less likely to welcome the wining, dining, and gifting that was a normal part of detailing in the past, worried about the perceived conflict of interest. Patients, too, are more aware of that conflict of interest, keeping a close eye on how doctors come to their decisions.

3 Circles of Influence Have Broadened

Healthcare providers turn to a larger network of people and sources today, all of which influence the pharmaceuticals they choose to prescribe. Those influencers include the journals they read, as well as the key opinion leaders they admire, but also digital sources, online forums, YouTube videos, social media, advertisements, patients, and payers. The intimate and trusted group of advisors that used to have the ear of physicians—influencing their prescribing decisions—still exists, but remains only part of the larger whole.

4 For Physicians, Control is Key

None of those influencers, though, have the final word. Like the patients they treat, prescribers today feel more empowered, taking ownership over their own research and information gathering, and ultimately making their own decisions after visiting all of the information sources they trust. Pharmaceutical reps can help inform that opinion through the information they provide, but must find a fine balance, being careful not to come on too strong.

5 Digital is Now

Just as the healthcare environment itself has changed, so has the way many healthcare providers prefer to interact. A 2013 study of nearly 3,000 primary care physicians and specialists—conducted jointly by Capgemini Consulting and physician relationship management provider Quantia—found that 67 percent surveyed rated digital media as their preferred source for accessing information; only 20 percent preferred pharmaceutical reps. When asked why, 40 percent of the physicians said they believed digital media offers the more relevant and personalized content they looked for. Digital interactions fit with the new schedules physicians must keep, allowing for faster, convenient—and more transparent—exchanges.

Following the Prescriber's Path

Despite the changes that have occurred in the industry, though, it's clear that physicians are still prescribing just as many—even more—pharmaceuticals as they have in the past. In fact, the IMS Institute for Healthcare Informatics predicted that global spending on medicine would reach \$1 trillion in 2014. That means physicians still need ways to wade through all of the drugs available today, to find the ones that are right for their patients. But pharmaceutical companies can't rely on the same methods they've used in the past to get their message to prescribers. Today, in addition to traditional detailing methods, they must also reach prescribers' influencers and access the digital paths doctors turn to for the information they need. But they must do so without losing the personalized approach that prescribers have come to know.

For help, pharmaceutical companies are turning to new technologies and tools that allow them to execute all of their digital marketing activities. But many of those technologies simply aren't robust enough for the job

Many marketing teams, for instance, have turned to apps—more specifically point-and-click solutions that deliver a specific set of marketing capabilities. But apps are designed for more limited needs, and

can quickly fall apart when it comes time to connect the functionality of each tool. Since those apps weren't necessarily designed to work together or share data, they can lead to siloed information and days spent on collection and trying to draw inferences from the data that exists.

A marketing cloud, by comparison, allows companies to break through data, brand, and functional siloes to provide a 360-degree view of their marketing efforts, helping organizations understand how their audience is behaving—both online and in response to more conventional single- and multichannel campaigns. It can take care of both core and non-core marketing functionality and meet the needs of the three types of marketing prevalent in today's environment: lifecycle, content, and social marketing.

Oracle Marketing Cloud for Life Sciences, for instance, helps attract, convert, and retain customers, reaching a company's optimal consumers across all vital marketing channels. Using Digital Body Language™—a study of the way customers and potential customers seek, receive, use, and interact with online information—Oracle Marketing Cloud provides comprehensive marketing solutions along with an open, flexible platform that connects to traditional systems, apps, and data. It also provides a better view into how prescribers interact with information online, while allowing pharmaceutical marketers to reach a larger portion of the prescriber population, segmenting and targeting them to meet their specific needs.

In other words, it helps them send messages that matter, in a way that will connect.

Conclusion

A changing healthcare environment, paired with new priorities and needs, has altered the journey prescribers take on their route to choosing the medicines they recommend. As a result, the old methods that pharmaceutical companies used to influence healthcare providers aren't as effective as they once were. The detail men of the past—relying on strong sales pitches—are being replaced with sophisticated digital communications. That's left marketing teams looking for new techniques and tools to help fuel the process. Marketing cloud technology—including Oracle Marketing Cloud—can help.

By using a marketing cloud and Modern Marketing techniques, pharmaceutical companies can meet the new needs that exist along the prescriber's journey, while still getting their message across. Like today's patients and healthcare providers, the result is a more enabled marketing team, better able to approach today's new healthcare needs.

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